



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive

DIVISION OF PLANNING & PERMITTING

Livable Frederick Planning & Design Office

Steven C. Horn, Division Director
Kimberly Gaines, Director

TO: Frederick County Council

THROUGH: Jessica Fitzwater, County Executive

FROM: Steve Horn, Division Director
Kimberly Gaines, Director, Livable Frederick Planning & Design Office

DATE: February 13, 2023

SUBJECT: Proposed Listing on County Register of Historic Places – Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District (CR # 20-04)

ISSUE:

Should the County Council add a multi-property district known as the “Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District,” located northeast of New Market, to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places?

BACKGROUND:

The Applicants, property owners within the proposed district, have made application to list their properties together in one historic district known as the *Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District* on the Frederick County Register of Historic Places ([Attachment 1](#)). The district encompasses 1,161.1 acres of land and consists of ten historic properties and one unimproved parcel in the New Market vicinity. The proposed district is roughly bounded by portions of Detrick Road, Old Annapolis Road, Old National Pike, and Green Valley Road ([Attachment 2](#)). Each of the ten historic properties are individually listed on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) and eight of these properties were determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Properties. Additionally, eight of the ten properties are located within a MIHP district, known as the Peace and Plenty Rural Historic Landscape (F-5-124). The chart below identifies each individual property within the proposed district and their individual MIHP number as well as National Register eligibility.

Properties Within Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District			
Property Name	MIHP Number	NR Eligibility	Within State's District
Basil Harding Farm	F-5-47	✓ (Crit. C)	✓
Still Work Farm	F-5-100	✓ (Crit. C)	✓
William Downey House	F-5-83	✓ (Crit. C)	✓
Wright Downey Farm	F-5-84	✓ (Crit. C)	✓
Capt. Ignatius Dorsey Farm	F-5-78	✓ (Crit. C)	✓

Samuel Dorsey Barn & Milk house	(part of F-5-77)	No but considered to contribute to district	
Vernon Dorsey House	F-5-27	No but considered to contribute to district	✓
Higgins-Bennett House	F-5-85	✓ (Crit. C)	✓
Daniel James House	F-5-39	✓ (Crit. C)	
Walter Burrall Lime Plant	F-5-120	✓ (Crit. D)	✓

Furthermore, the district is located within the County’s Eastern Priority Preservation Area. Most of the farms, apart from the Vernon Dorsey House and the Higgins-Bennet House, participate in either the County’s Installment Purchase Program or the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation easement program. The proposed district includes 48 contributing resources ([Attachment 3](#)). These contributing resources include the historic dwellings, barns, lime plant, and remaining domestic and agricultural outbuildings dated prior to 1940.

The Department of the Interior National Park Service’s *Cultural Landscapes: Rural Historic Districts in the National Park System* defines a rural district as “a geographically definable area, possessing a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of landscape components which are united by human use and past events or aesthetically by plan or physical development.” Landscape components considered in identifying and evaluating a rural historic district include but are not limited to overall patterns of landscape spatial organization, land use, circulation networks, boundary demarcations, cluster arrangement, structures, and vegetation related to land use. The proposed Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District meets the National Park Service’s definition since it includes a significant concentration of landscape components united by the area’s agricultural activities and architecture, which is described further below.

The Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District consists of eleven separate parcels, with eight historic farmhouses, eight bank barns, one dairy barn, a lime plant, and various outbuildings. These parcels at one time were part of larger land patents, the two earliest consisting of land surveyed in 1742 called “Dispute,” which is now the Daniel James farm, and 60 acres surveyed in 1740 as “Turner’s Forest,” which is where the William Downey house is located. “Turners Forest” was later purchased in 1759 by George Burchard (Burkett or Burckhardt), “who assembled several tracts into a property of about 928.5 acres by 1784. This larger tract was called ‘Peace and Plenty’.”

The earliest farmers to the area were English moving into the area from the tidewater area and arrived during the Rural Agrarian Intensification period (1730-1805). John James was appointed overseer of the Monocacy-Annapolis Road, a portion renamed later as Old Annapolis Road, in 1740 and acquired “Dispute,” part of the eventual 238-acre Daniel James farm, in 1742. If John James built any structures during his time on the “Dispute” property, they were no longer extant by the time his grandson Daniel inherited the farm. The stone house on the Daniel James farm dates to 1791, according to a date stone in the north gable end observed during a 1978 survey. The grave of John James is in the family cemetery on the property and is the oldest substantiated grave in the county, dating to 1750. Another English family that occupied the district from the 1740s through the 1790s was the Dorsey family. By 1760, a section of the William Downey House and Still Work were built. The first section of the Higgins Bennett House was

constructed in circa 1790 and an addition to Still Work was built in 1799. While architectural styles in the New Market region were predominately vernacular during this time period, high styles of Georgian and Federal were found, including in the Peace and Plenty district and can be linked to the influence of tidewater plantations.

During the Agricultural-Industrial Transition period (1805-1870), in which transportation options increased as well as improvements to industry and agriculture, houses associated with Basil Harding, Wright Downey, and Vernon Dorsey were constructed. The William Downey house and Higgins-Bennet house were expanded during this time as well. Architecture characterized in the New Market region during this period was impacted by the use of architectural pattern books. The Greek Revival style became popular, primarily represented in the use of moldings, columns, cornice trim, and interior decoration. The Captain Ignatius Dorsey house was completed circa 1870, at the end of the agricultural-industrial transition period and beginning of the Industrial/Urban Dominance period (1870-1930) when the Italianate style became popular. The Basil Harding house was expanded in 1885 during this later period which saw broader availability of machine tools to rural carpenters enabling them to produce scroll-sawn porch and cornice trim, brackets, and turned columns.

The farmers in the district were rural elites who owned large farms and, in some cases, multiple farms and/or companion town homes in New Market. Because of their English heritage and tidewater connections, the early farmers in the district planted large tobacco crops. Tobacco crops grown by the farmers required intense labor which was provided by enslaved persons. The English were more likely to utilize slave labor than farmers of German heritage. New Market became a large slave-holding area. At least four of the families in the Peace and Plenty district held slaves: Dorseys, Downeys, Bennetts, and James. Cordellia Downey enslaved 27 people when she inherited her husband's estate, the William Downey house. The Daniel James farm is reported to have been worked by 100 enslaved persons and the 1910 *History of Frederick County* states that 42 enslaved persons left the farm on the day Emancipation was announced. Perry Bennett, of the Higgins-Bennett farm on Lime Plant Road, is also shown in the 1860 US Census, Schedule 2 as a slaveholder of ten enslaved persons. No surviving structures related to slavery remain on any of the properties.

In addition to tobacco, the farms in the district also were producing wheat, rye, corn, oats, hay, butter, and potatoes, according to the 1850 agricultural census. Most of the farms also had livestock consisting of cows, cattle, horses, swine, and sheep. Following the 1860's, the crops grown on the farms trended away from tobacco production and grain cultivation continued as a primary source of income. Increased butter production significantly rose between 1850 and 1860 and would continue to rise during the late 19th and early 20th centuries as farmers moved away from grain cultivation. This was a trend that occurred throughout the county.

When considering a historic property for designation, it is necessary to evaluate it for both its significance and integrity. Significance is the importance of a property to the history, architecture, archeology, engineering, or culture of a community, a State, or the nation. Additionally, the property must be placed within a historic context to support its significance. Historic context is information about the period, place, and events that created, influenced, or formed the backdrop to the historic resources. Integrity is composed of seven qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. In order for a property to qualify for designation, the property must meet one of the County Register

criteria by being associated with a historic context and retaining historic integrity of those features necessary to convey its significance.

Utilizing this evaluation process, the Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the County; exemplifies cultural, economic, social, political, or historic heritage of the County and its communities; and is identified with persons who influenced society. The agricultural district had a continuous role in the periods of rural agrarian intensification, agricultural-industrial transition, and industrial/urban dominance. The stone and brick farmhouses exemplify the cultural and economic status of the English landowners, especially the William Downey house and Captain Ignatius Dorsey House. Furthermore, this group of wealthy, elite farmers influenced the economic development of not only nearby New Market, but also the County. This district is associated with another group of persons, the enslaved, whose labor produced the commodities on many of the farms which in turn provided the economic foundation for not just New Market, but the County and even the State. While no aboveground resources associated with the enslaved exist on these farms, there is potential for belowground resources to yield additional information. Additionally, the farms represent a typical agricultural complex that illustrates regional agricultural patterns from the mid-19th through the mid-20th centuries.

In addition to its historical significance, the district also has architectural significance. The farmhouses in the district are characteristically two-and-a-half story masonry houses, the majority stone. They are three to five bays wide under gable roofs built between 1760 and 1870. The bank barns maintain their form and mass even though several of them no longer contain the historic wood siding. The additional agricultural outbuildings found on the farms are typical types of construction found on other farms in the County. Overall, the farmsteads located within the district are good examples of the evolution of farm life and architectural preferences over the period of 1760-1940. The additions of dairy barns, concrete silos, and milk houses during the early 1900's is indicative of the development of the dairy industry in Frederick County.

The landscape components of the Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District clearly represent a familiar and established visual feature to the community that is largely unchanged. Together, the historic vistas of agricultural fields, historic farm complexes, woodlots, fences, meandering streams, farm ponds, and farm lanes create a landscape with high historic integrity. The organization of land-use involving woodlots, pastures, and agricultural features associated with prime farmland is evident. The use of native materials including stone, wood, and clay for red bricks strongly contributes to the sense of time and place in this landscape. Patterns of workmanship evident in the buildings, the symmetry of the agricultural fields, and the prominent fences and walls are significant examples of traditional farming practices. While modern intrusions such as newer houses and farm structures can be viewed, the overall components that contribute to the historic character and integrity of the landscape are well preserved. The Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District with over two centuries of agriculture and long-term family ownership of property evokes a clear sense of time and place powerfully linking this agrarian landscape with the past.

Historic Preservation Commission Review & Recommendation

The HPC voted to recommend the historic properties known as the Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District listed on the County Register of Historic Places at the December 2, 2020 meeting ([Attachments 4 and 5](#)).

In acting upon the application, the HPC determined, pursuant to Section 1-23-6 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, that the district was eligible for listing on the County Register, noting that the district should be designated based upon the following criteria listed in the Ordinance:

- The property has significant character, interest, or value as part of development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the county, state, or nation.
- The property is identified with a person or group of persons who influenced society.
- The property exemplifies cultural, economic, social, political, or historic heritage of county and its communities.
- The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or architecture.
- The property represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or County, due to its singular physical characteristics, landscape, or historical event.

The HPC included the entirety of the properties within the proposed County Register designation at the December 2, 2020 meeting. Since all but two properties within the district have an existing agricultural preservation easement, concerns were raised during the planning meetings for the design guidelines regarding potential conflicts between the existing agricultural easements and the historic district overlay. In order to resolve these conflicts, a tiered review approach was proposed and supported by the subcommittee. Subsequently, the HPC held a public hearing on April 6, 2022 to consider the proposed tiered review and voted unanimously in support ([Attachment 6](#)).

The tiered review for the proposed Peace and Plenty rural historic district maintains the 1,100 acre district while designating areas with the district boundaries that would have full HPC review. Areas outside the designated HPC review area would be subject only to advisory review by the HPC or its designee. The areas where the HPC have full review are around the historic farmsteads and vary in acreage depending upon the number of historic resources within the area. For work proposed within the advisory review area, the property owners may consult with the HPC or its designee and the guidelines for appropriate repair methods and treatments; however, there would be no requirement to follow the guidance.

Staff notified all property owners in the proposed district of the tiered review ([Attachment 7](#)) and worked with them to prepare mapping with their recommended boundary for the HPC review. This mapping was then presented to the HPC as an amendment to the district nomination application at their June 1, 2022 meeting and unanimously supported ([Attachment 8](#)). From there, the tiered review and mapping was presented to the Frederick County Agricultural Preservation Board and MALPF for their approvals. Approval was obtained from these organizations on June 27 and September 27, 2022, respectively ([Attachments 9 and 10](#)).

Once listed on the Register, proposed changes to the exterior of any structure or the site (including any visible site improvements such as driveways, signage, or significant alteration of the landscape) must receive a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Frederick County Register of Historic Places

As of this date, there are twenty-nine (29) properties listed on the County Register (CR). Listing on the CR is a voluntary action initiated by a property owner or other party with an interest in the property. Special tax credits and county grant funding for preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation expenditures may be available to owners of CR properties. All exterior work undertaken to a CR-listed property must first be approved by the Frederick County Historic Preservation Commission under its Certificate of Appropriateness application process.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the application to list the Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District (CR# 20-04) on the Frederick County Register of Historic Places be forwarded to the County Council for a public hearing and approval.

Approve? Yes _____ No _____

Jessica Fitzwater, County Executive
Frederick County, Maryland

Date

FINANCIAL IMPACT: No

ATTACHMENT(S):

- Attachment 1 – Application: County Register Nomination Form/Statement of Significance
- Attachment 2 – Locator Map: Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District
- Attachment 3 – Peace and Plenty Rural Historic District Contributing Structures List
- Attachment 4 – HPC Meeting Agenda: December 2, 2020
- Attachment 5 – HPC Meeting Minutes: December 2, 2020
- Attachment 6 – HPC Meeting Minutes: April 6, 2022
- Attachment 7 - Notification to Peace and Plenty Property Owners
- Attachment 8 – HPC Meeting Minutes: June 1, 2022
- Attachment 9 – Frederick County Agricultural Advisory Board Minutes: June 27, 2022
- Attachment 10 – MALPF Approval Letter to Storms September 27, 2022